II.—CALLING ATTENTION TO THE PICKETING ON THE 19TH JULY 1962.

SRI S. K. SAMBANDHAN : Sir, with your permission, I wish to call the attention of the Hon. the Chief Minister to a matter of urgent public importance, namely, the recent picketing on the 19th July 1962 and the steps taken by the Government in that connection and the present position thereof.

THE HON. SRI R. VENKATARAMAN : Mr. Chairman, Sir, on the 19th July volunteers of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam picketed the Collectorates and other Revenue offices as a part of their campaign to protest against rising prices. In most of these cases, the picketers actively and physically obstructed the Government servants and other members of the public from entering these offices and hence, they had to be arrested. I desire to draw particular attention of this House to the fact that although the Government considered such a demonstration totally inappropriate and unwarranted, they did not arrest the volunteers who merely stood beside these offices and raised slogans and thus made a nuisance of themselves, as long as they did not physically obstruct the people from entering the offices. Only those who prevented the people from entering the offices and refused to leave the place even after being duly warned that such obstruction was legally objectionable, were arrested under section 7 of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1932.

About 8,100 persons were arrested throughout the State for such picketing. Among those arrested were a number of Members of Parliament and Members of the Madras Legislature.

While in most centres the demonstrations passed off uneventfully, there were some ugly scenes of violence in a few centres particularly in Madras City and Vellore. Anti-social elements tried to dominate the scene in the City, when they indulged in indiscriminate stone-throwing both at members of the public and at the Police Officers who were discharging their duties. Acts of hooliganism such as stone-throwing on State Transport buses, assaulting members of the public and setting fire to a telephone booth have been reported in the City. On account of these acts of violence, there has been considerable loss to the State Transport and great inconvenience to the public. These rowdy acts had to be put down firmly by the Police and it is a matter for great satisfaction to the Government that the Police dealt with the situation firmly and tactfully, and effectively checked the activities of the anti-social elements without using more than the minimum force. In this process the Police in the City had to resort to mild lathi charges and also fire tear gas shells.

In Vellore, a crowd of about 3,000 got unruly after the arrest of Sri Annadurai, M.P., and other D.M.K. leaders who picketed the Collectorate there. The Police had to resort to a mild lathi charge and fire tear gas shells to restore order there.

A mild lathi charge had also to be resorted to in Sriperumbudur, Madurantakam and Uthiramerur in Chingleput district

In the course of these incidents in the City and Vellore, about 93 Police Officers were hit by stones and injured. These include the Commissioner of Police at Madras and the Vice-Principal of the Police Training College at Vellore.

The Police took vigorous action to patrol the affected areas and to round up known rowdy elements in a determined bid to curb lawlessness. Besides those arrested for picketing, about 1,800 people were arrested in the City of Madras and about 23 in Vellore. Of these more than a thousand have already been convicted for disorderly conduct.

Of the 1,800 persons arrested for picketing about 1,600 persons have been released on their tendering unconditional apology expressing regret for their behaviour and giving an assurance that such behaviour will not be repeated. More letters of apology have been received and are under scrutiny.

Charge sheets have been ordered to be laid against the others and so far more than 4,000 charge sheets have been laid. Government are anxious that these cases should be disposed of as expeditiously as possible and, therefore, propose to appoint Special Magistrates in Tiruchirappalli, Madurai, Coimbatore and Thanjavur, where there is a large congregation of these prisoners.

During the period of trial, Government have issued orders that all Members of the Legislative Assembly and the Council and Members of Parliament as well as former Members of the Legislature and Parliament and the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor should, if in Central Jails, be placed in the Special Class and if in sub-jails, be allowed special class treatment. These under-trials have been given special facilities for bringing food from their home and from outside and in many cases have been allowed to use their own bedding and mosquito curtains. I mention these to show that every effort has been made to treat the prisoners with special consideration while in jail.

Government are gratified to note that their efforts to put down lawlessness have had the unqualified support of all sections of the public. I may state without fear of contradiction that the thoughtless demonstrations initiated by the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and the violent and unruly acts that followed in its wake, have created a sense of disgust and revulsion in the minds of the people. Government are happy that public opinion has stood solidly behind the Police in their endeavour to maintain law and order in the face of violent provocation.

(The hon. Member Sri K. S. Abdul Wahab rose in his place.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: **There can be no discussion on the state-**